



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

February 2, 2009

John D. Porcari, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, Maryland 21076

Dear Secretary Porcari:

We have completed our review of the Maryland Transit Administration's Purple Line Alternatives Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (AA/DEIS) and are sharing with you our recommendations for the Locally Preferred Alternative.

We all recognize the need to address mobility and accessibility issues in the corridor between Bethesda and New Carrollton. The corridor is experiencing unacceptable levels of roadway congestion, unreliable transit travel times, limited travel mode options and degraded transit accessibility to the larger metropolitan region due to inferior connections to radial Metrorail lines and to other rail and bus services. Furthermore, construction of the Purple Line would provide environmental benefits to an area classified by the Environmental Protection Agency as a serious non-attainment region, while simultaneously providing a stimulus for community revitalization. It is also critical to another shared goal of promoting smart growth.

We have arrived at our recommendations only after discussions with many stakeholder groups and individuals, and after reviewing the testimony from MTA's four public hearings, the thousands of pieces of correspondence we have received, and detailed analysis and recommendations from our Planning Board. We also considered the meeting between you and County Executives Johnson and Leggett. After considerable analysis and discussions, it is evident that light rail is the more viable long-term option given the consistency with the Master Plan, the high level of forecasted ridership, the better travel times, and the ability of light rail to better support transit-oriented development.

As we transmit these recommendations, we would be remiss if we did not take the opportunity to thank Governor O'Malley for his championing this project, not only in his words but in his deeds: in particular, his retaining full funding of preliminary engineering and design of the Purple Line, while many other projects in the Consolidated Transportation Program have had to be eliminated or scaled back significantly.

We also want to recognize the tremendous job by MTA and its consultant team in bringing the project to this point in its development. We especially want to express our gratitude to Mike Madden, MTA's study manager, who has personally shepherded the Purple Line study through good times and bad over the past decade.

The Montgomery County Executive's and Council's joint recommendations regarding the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) are to:

1. Select Light Rail Transit (LRT) as the transit mode for the Purple Line.
2. Select the Medium Investment LRT that uses the master planned Georgetown Branch right of way between Bethesda and Silver Spring, with the modifications noted below:
 - Incorporate the High Investment LRT design for the Capital Crescent Trail through the tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue.
 - Curtail the tail tracks west of the Bethesda stop so that they would extend no further than 100 feet west of the portal of the Apex Building, and less than 100 feet west if possible.
 - Plant grass between and to each side of the tracks where the line is parallel to the Capital Crescent Trail and not on a bridge or in a tunnel.
 - Expand the pavement width of the Capital Crescent Trail to a minimum of 12 feet, and, where existing right-of-way is available (i.e., between the western end of the Columbia Country Club to the east end of Rock Creek Park) and cost and tree loss would not be significant, expand the pavement width to up to 16 feet with a wider buffer between the LRT and the trail.
 - Before selecting the LPA, evaluate the cost, impacts, and operations implications of single-tracking one or more sections of the LRT where it would parallel the Capital Crescent Trail.
 - Before selecting the LPA, bring the evaluation of a tunnel option between the Silver Spring Transit Center (SSTC) and the vicinity of Wayne Avenue/Mansfield Road to the same level of detail as has been already completed for the surface option between these points.
 - If the surface option is ultimately selected for Wayne Avenue, delete the Dale Drive stop from the LPA but design the line in a way that would facilitate adding a stop there in the future.
3. Perform the following analyses during the preliminary engineering phase:
 - Examine the feasibility of using hybrid light rail vehicles (or dual powered vehicles) that do not require wires, poles, and electrical substations.
 - Identify more access points to the Capital Crescent Trail than those currently appearing in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (e.g., from the Coquelin Parkway right-of-way in Chevy Chase and from the Grubb Road/Terrace Drive intersection in Silver Spring, and others).
 - Investigate design and building techniques to maximize the retention of existing trees in the corridor.
 - If the surface option is selected for downtown and East Silver Spring, give special attention to the LRT vehicle crossing of Georgia Avenue and intersection of Fenton Street/Wayne Avenue to ensure that the LRT, pedestrians, and vehicular traffic will operate in a compatible manner.

- If the surface option is selected for downtown and East Silver Spring, conduct a detailed study to address:
 - a. Pedestrian safety and station accessibility;
 - b. Forecast ridership at the SSTC and Fenton Street stations;
 - c. Transit, vehicle queuing, and parking operations in shared lanes, including options to minimize adverse economic effects on retail businesses along Bonifant Street; and
 - d. Wayne Avenue Green Trail design.
- Develop design details for the Capital Crescent Trail that include:
 - a. detailed plans for all access points, including the connection to the Rock Creek Trail;
 - b. retaining walls and security or privacy fencing;
 - c. landscaping (including shade trees);
 - d. aesthetic treatments for the bridges crossing Rock Creek (including coordination with the National Park Service);
 - e. signing and marking;
 - f. bicycle facilities at Purple Line stations; and
 - g. a public plaza at the Woodmont East terminus.
- Prepare a phasing plan along University Boulevard in the Takoma/Langley Crossroads area that identifies how LRT implementation will be coordinated with establishment of the wider master planned typical section.
- Provide continuous sidewalks and/or shared use paths on both sides of roadways that carry the Purple Line alignment.
- Include mitigation strategies for the following impacts:
 - a. Wetlands and Waters of the US, with impacts and mitigation identified by watershed;
 - b. obtains Parks Department approval for proposed mitigation sites in parkland;
 - c. noise impacts at wheel squeal locations;
 - d. historic resources – including mitigation for the impact for Falkland Apartments); and
 - e. Parks Department property impacts, including the Brookville Road Maintenance site.

We look forward to working with you and our colleagues in Prince George's County to gain Federal funding approval for preliminary engineering and, ultimately, for the design and construction of the entire 16-mile Purple Line. This is a vital project for the state and the region, and we must collectively move forward to bring the Purple Line into service as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Isiah Leggett
County Executive



Phil Andrews, President
County Council

John D. Porcari, Secretary
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cc: The Honorable Martin O'Malley, Governor of Maryland
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski, United States Senate
The Honorable Benjamin Cardin, United States Senate
The Honorable Christopher Van Hollen, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Donna Edwards, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Steny Hoyer, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Richard Madaleno, Chair, Montgomery County Senate Delegation
The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair, Montgomery County House Delegation
The Honorable Jack Johnson, Prince George's County Executive
The Honorable Marilyn Bland, Chair, Prince George's County Council
The Honorable Melony Griffith, Chair, Prince George's County House Delegation
The Honorable C. Anthony Muse, Chair, Prince George's County Senate Delegation
The Honorable Kathy Strom, Mayor, Town of Chevy Chase
The Honorable Bruce Williams, Mayor, City of Takoma Park
Royce Hanson, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board
Samuel Parker, Jr., Chair, Prince George's County Planning Board